



Regional Housing Strategy

Lower Cape Subregional Stakeholder Working Group

Meeting 2 Summary: May 23, 2023

The second Lower Cape subregional meeting for the Regional Housing Strategy was held on May 23, 2023. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on stakeholder engagement and outreach, receive feedback on a definition of attainable housing, and to review example strategies to address defined housing challenges.

Following introductions, Cape Cod Commission staff provided an update on stakeholder engagement including a summary of key themes from prior meetings as well as preliminary results from the housing preference survey. Meeting participants were asked to provide input on defining attainable housing, based on their own experience and from examples around the country. Commission staff then provided an overview of strategies to address housing challenges that have been utilized across the country and asked participants to provide their thoughts on strategies that best address the housing challenges on Cape Cod.

DEFINING ATTAINABLE HOUSING

There was general agreement that attainable housing was distinct from Affordable housing, but there were many different viewpoints on what the term “attainable” meant within the context of the Cape. The group preferred the following draft definition, *“Attainable housing is housing that does not exceed 30% of an individual's income and provides for the ability to enter and move within the local housing market freely”*. Participants in the room who were less familiar with the technicalities of housing development also preferred the first definition. Chatham’s definition of attainable housing was mentioned as an example that includes AMI limits (the town defines attainable housing as housing for people who earn between 80% and 200% of the AMI). Participants generally thought that including numbers within the definition, like a certain AMI or percent of income, provides a more tangible goal and could allow towns to better advocate for their needs to the state. Multiple participants also said that the terms “safe” and “stable” should be in the definition. This harkens back to the phrase “move within the local housing market freely” in the draft definition. It was noted that adding these terms would make it clearer that safety and stability in housing allows free movement within the market and that homeless and unhoused populations are being considered.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS KEY CHALLENGES

Commission staff provided an overview of some example strategies other places are using that can address one of four key housing challenges in the region: it isn't allowed or it's too complicated to build housing other than single-family homes, it's too expensive to build housing, it's too expensive to secure or maintain housing, and it's hard to find and keep year-round rental housing.

Participants showed concerted interest in accessory dwelling unit (ADU) and modular housing strategies. It was noted that the interest in ADUs is there, at least among town staff and elected officials, but creating them has been very difficult, mostly due to how expensive it is. One participant showed interest in the Aid for ADUs program in Eagle County, CO and thought that something similar could work on the Cape. Regionalizing ADU production was mentioned as a way to reduce costs, through possible bulk orders of modular ADUs from places like Maine and California where modular housing is being constructed. One participant mentioned that a pattern book for modular ADUs would be very helpful and could get residents on board concerning the aesthetics of ADUs. Another participant said that it will require multiple strategies working together, like zoning by right for ADUs, modular designs and construction, pre-approved models, design guidelines, and a funding piece, for the construction of ADUs and modular housing to really make a difference.

Participants highlighted the need for more inter-municipal and regional collaboration. It was suggested that a regional posting board for essential service jobs would be beneficial. The County's Chamber of Commerce, with support from local Chambers, could keep a list of jobs (firefighters, nurses, etc.) that are open across the region and would help towns be more aware of other towns' needs in terms of workforce and related housing. Along the lines of regional action, the idea of the creation of a group specifically focused on legislation, policy, and advocacy was offered.

There was also interest in the Nantucket Covenant program and questions about how that is implemented and supported by local government.

It was suggested that the strategies be categorized into those that have immediate impact versus longer-term impact (12-24 months vs. 5 years for example).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Other considerations for development of the regional housing strategy that participants raised during the meeting included:

- Consider opportunities for taxing investor properties to help preserve year-round housing.
- The need for public education surfaced multiple times during the discussion, particularly education that dispels the "outsider mentality" of Cape residents towards off-Cape populations. Adding a personal note to education, like telling the stories of those who found housing on the Cape, may work to humanize the housing crisis in the region.

- When talking about preference surveys, participants noted that leaning too much on local preference may invite opposition and fuel for debate and could potentially stifle housing diversity.
- It was suggested that preference surveys also be made available to people who had lived in the area previously but needed to move away.
- The stabilization of the Cape's emblematic workforce – i.e., those working within the blue economy (like fishermen)—is critical and related to housing.
- Building codes were mentioned as a cause for increasing building costs. This would have to be changed at the state level.

Meeting 2 Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach: Cape Cod Commission staff will provide an update on the stakeholder engagement process for the Cape Cod Regional Housing Strategy, including a summary of key themes from prior stakeholder meetings and preliminary results from the housing preference survey.
3. Defining Attainable Housing: Cape Cod Commission staff will share examples of how attainable housing has been defined in other housing plans from around the country and facilitate a discussion on defining attainable housing for Cape Cod.
4. Strategies to Address Defined Housing Challenges: Cape Cod Commission staff will provide an overview of strategies to address housing challenges that have been utilized from across the country that could be impactful on Cape Cod and seek feedback on strategies to address housing challenges that are appropriate for Cape Cod.
5. Next Steps: Commission staff will discuss next steps for participants, including future meeting dates.

Meeting 2 Participants

Stakeholder Participants

- Donna Kalinick, Town of Brewster
- Elizabeth Harder, Town of Harwich
- Gloria McPherson, Town of Chatham
- John Pappalardo, Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance
- Katie Donovan, Town of Chatham
- Kim Bourgea, Harwich Ecumenical Council



- Marsha Allgeier, Town of Orleans
- Michael Lach, Harwich Conservation Trust
- Ryan Christenberry, Town of Chatham
- Susan Bridges, Brewster Ponds Coalition
- Brendan Lowney, Harwich Affordable Housing Trust
- Bill Bogdanovich, Broad Reach Healthcare
- George Meservey, Town of Orleans

Cape Cod Commission Staff Present

- Kristy Senatori, Executive Director
- Erin Perry, Deputy Director
- Chloe Schaefer, Chief Planner
- Liz Kellam, Community Design Planner
- Cory Murray, Community Development Planner
- Sarah Colvin, Communications Manager